



## **Dawson Regional Planning Commission Stakeholder Workshop June 11-12, 2013 Large Group Discussion Summary**

In an ongoing effort to provide early and meaningful opportunity for stakeholder engagement, this workshop focused on soliciting feedback from participants with respect to the management tools available to the Commission for developing plan alternatives and the criteria that could be used in the evaluation framework for comparing plan alternatives.

### **Discussion on what the plan can do and say:**

- Haven't discussed what effect the Dawson plan will have on the regions outside the planning region border (e.g., looking, even globally, at the broader issues of climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, possibility of Yukon as a future refuge)
  - *Response from Commission:* Although hard to look too broadly, will be considering issues within and outside Yukon border (e.g., migratory birds, tourism, economic interests, climate change)
  - *Response from planning team:* We are benefitting from the planning processes that have come before by adopting a common planning process, similar LMUs, applying lessons learned (e.g., being more transparent on developing alternatives); all of the regional plans have to work together
  - There is a responsibility on shoulders of the Dawson plan to be accountable to other regions
  - Final Agreements state that there will be 'regard' for the interests of Canadians
- Can the plan address airspace?
  - *Response from planning team:* Navigation is regulated at a federal level but the plan can make recommendations about things like sensitive areas and airport pollutants
  - *Response from planning team:* Some best management practices already exist for aircraft use in Yukon that the plan can utilize
- Can the plan address water?
  - *Response from planning team:* The Commission can designate land bases adjacent to the river as having some specific value (e.g., conservation) but can't regulate speed and size of boats
  - But the plan can make recommendations about boat speed and size that would be taken into account when projects are reviewed by YESAB (conformity checks) and the Commission should be considering this

### **Discussion around the illustrative plan alternatives:**

- Roads drawn into the LMUs, do they represent potential roads in future?
  - *Response from planning team:* They are not recommended corridors, just looking at what the consequences might be on other values
  - Routes are based on a road corridor study done by Access Consulting Group in 2003 for the Government of Yukon entitled *Conceptual Study Report to*



*Identify Potential Natural Resource Infrastructure Access Corridors*, but caution that the study was a desktop exercise based on physical feasibility

- The IMAs presented have no numbers associated with them – still at a conceptual level?
  - *Response from planning team:* Yes, specifics would have to be defined down the road; speaking broadly, they represent different caps on levels of development that would be allowed on the landscape
- Caution around the use of Protected Areas for cultural areas (that are not likely to move) versus wildlife (where boundaries may move, shift and change over time)
  - *Response from planning team:* Economic interests also move, shift and change
  - Cultural values and wildlife habitat are often tied together
- Yukon River Corridor – when the river is in one zone would it be defined differently from when it is another?
  - Sub-regional planning may be better at addressing this level of specificity (e.g., localized values such as cultural heritage zones or fine-filtered conservation areas like nesting sites)
  - *Response from planning team:* Agree, would expect another level of detailed planning after the Dawson plan makes recommendations
- Gaps/white spaces in the resource summary maps should not imply that there are no values there, it should be clear that those are areas where data is lacking
- Will LMUs be defined by the fall meeting?
  - *Response from planning team:* Yes, but need to ensure that we get the boundaries for the LMUs defined well first

### **Discussion around the evaluation framework**

- Would like to see high-level dollar figures attached to implementation
  - *Response from planning team:* Yes, costs for implementing specific tools
- *Question from planning team:* LMU boundaries based on watersheds (from Forestry Management Plan), should something else be used?
  - Forestry LMUs are a good place to start but may need to do some overlays (e.g., with historic mining areas) to see where separate LMUs may be needed
  - *Comment from planning team:* Watersheds relate well to natural values but may not relate well to other values
  - Watershed areas may need to be split up depending on other values or could be combined if they have the same management objectives
  - *Comment from planning team:* Defining by natural features is helpful on the ground, easier to know when you have crossed from one zone into another
- *Comment from planning team:* Evaluation table shown in presentation is simplistic example just used for demonstration purposes – criteria and performance measures are still to be developed
- *Comment from planning team:* Thresholds for IMA zone types are similar to Peel and North Yukon plans based originally on caribou sensitivity
- Table can be deceiving until the L, M, and H thresholds have been defined



- Table seems to be a good tool but concern around how criteria will be picked and measured, there are tools that the Commission can use to determine if thresholds are economically feasible
- Concern around lumping forestry with other development, not all disturbance is created equal
- Should be kept in mind when determining thresholds that current regulations already constrict industries, caution around restricting them further (e.g., annual allowable cut was conservative)
- *Comment from planning team:* Use of thresholds is just one management tool that in past have been determined in part by science and in part formed by societal opinion because they are value choices
- BMPs are often referred to but need to remember that they are just guidelines, not rules; could be a Dawson plan recommendation that they be adopted as a minimum standard
- Example of the plan recommending to government – see more off-grid power generation to support mining operations

#### **Discussion regarding resource summary:**

- How much of the forestry management plan will be transported into the Dawson plan?
  - *Response from planning team:* Could be in its entirety; represented overlapping interests (e.g., riparian areas and forestry values)
  - At the planning table for the forestry management plan it was forest industry
  - Forestry management plan should be used as an overlay instead of a foundation for the Dawson plan
  - Look for synergies between resource sectors (mining, timber, others)
- Estimated value of mineral deposits – from what year; what value is this and what future value will it have?
  - *Response from planning team:* Based on 2012 market conditions
  - Mineral potential value based on gross in place value but a meaningless figure (it is comparative based on assumptions around pricing), better off saying how much gold discovered in the past five years, for example
  - *Response from planning team:* Purpose is to help understand relative mineral potential around the region

#### **Discussion about defining terms – for example, what is a trail, what is 'adaptive' vs. 'active' management?**

- *Response from planning team:* we need to be clear with our use of terminology

#### **Discussion regarding next steps:**

- In determining criteria, performance measures and what thresholds should be, will the Commission use focus groups from a variety of sectors to inform this?
  - *Response from planning team:* The technical working group will be helping to determine these, but the Commission should invite feedback from stakeholders as well



- Resource assessment summary – should be explicitly stated on the maps and in the text about the realities of the data (e.g., white areas mean no data/insufficient data; note where data was extrapolated from another source and not ground-truthed)

#### **Outstanding questions for the Commission:**

1. What is the process for finalizing LMU boundaries?
2. What is the process for developing and selecting the evaluation criteria?
3. How will choices be made for values where there is a lack of data?

#### **Closing comments:**

- General agreement that the workshop was productive; participants were glad for the opportunity to provide input and discuss issues with a variety of stakeholders; breakout sessions were constructive; and participants appreciated the challenging task that the Commission faces in developing the land use plan
- Saw many opportunities for compromise, commonalities in what people wanted, difficulty in how to get there
- Caution around what is put into the plan so that it doesn't scare away potential economic interests in the region
- The Commission appreciated all of the stakeholders' wisdom, experience, knowledge and participation that will help them with the task ahead
- Participants appreciated receiving the information package ahead of time
- Glad to see that the forestry management plan is being used considering all of the work that went into developing that plan
- The breakout groups did work well, but wasn't able to be in a group with everybody and would have liked that opportunity
- Good representation from almost every sector, an oil/gas representative was notably missing and there were times during discussions that we could have used more input on oil/gas potential
- Looking forward to next products coming out and for next opportunity to provide input
- Thanks to TH for hosting and for the good food!



## **Dawson Regional Planning Commission – Stakeholder Workshop June 11-12, 2013 Breakout Sessions – Common Ideas**

### **Tell us how you will choose and let us comment**

It was clearly expressed that participants wanted to be informed of, and be able to provide feedback on, the process for choosing evaluation criteria, performance measures, monitoring indicators and the zoning structure for the plan alternatives.

### **Conservation and economic development – not necessarily mutually exclusive**

All groups independently made the point that a wider range of conservation options should be considered, as opposed to designating something a “protected area” or not. It was repeatedly noted that some activities can co-exist and zoning doesn’t have to make them mutually exclusive; the points were made that it is possible to protect conservation values while still having responsible development and some industries rely on maintaining ecological integrity (e.g., forestry, outfitting, wilderness tourism). A full range of economic opportunities should be considered beyond resource harvesting/extraction.

It was repeatedly noted that conservation strategies in the north have to consider future access for potential economic interests (e.g., connecting to oil/gas basins). Discussions around this northern area highlighted the need for the plan to recognize the knowledge gaps with respect to all values and the limitations of existing data for the entire region.

### **The Yukon River Corridor is unique but how best to manage it?**

All groups discussed the potential treatment of the Yukon River Corridor as either a separate management zone or as an overlay, recognizing its unique cultural, economic and ecological character that should have a “greater duty of care” attached to it. However, it was noted that a fixed width boundary is not appropriate and there were questions around how activities in the river corridor would be managed differently along its length and how it would interact with the other zones – it was suggested that this might be too complex for the regional plan level. The groups noted concern around how water quality, quantity and flow will be protected for all watercourses and how this will change across zone boundaries.

### **Maximize efficiencies**

The plan should aim to maximize efficiencies within the landscape by planning for access that serves multiple uses and finding opportunities for industries to work together. Efficiencies could also be gained in the planning process by utilizing collaborative processes already completed (e.g., riparian guidelines from forest management plan could be the baseline for IMA zones).

It was repeatedly noted that sharing of information and resources could be improved both within governments and between different agencies; a central repository for data was suggested. There was noted frustration in the lack of consistency among regulatory regimes and a call for the plan to recommend a set of standards to be applied.



### **Use realistic and effective planning strategies**

The groups discussed possible planning strategies for zones of low and high development, as well as those with uncertainty around values. Some of the strategies that were commonly discussed included:

- **Seasonal restrictions** to protect conservation values (e.g., rare species, sensitive ecosystems, critical wildlife habitat, seasonal wildlife activities)
- **Buffers zones** around conservation and/or heritage values that are realistic and effective. It was repeatedly noted that conservation values in areas with existing high levels of disturbance (e.g., Gold Fields) require more protection than in areas with lower disturbance, as these values are most heavily impacted
- **Best management practices**, as long as they are applicable and useful, and potentially as enforceable conditions of permits instead of just guidelines
- **Monitoring and compliance measures** with clear actions to be taken (but need to consider the cost of implementation, who will bear the responsibility, and how the measures could impact future investment)
- **Access management** – allowances/restrictions on timing, type and mode; possibly specifying single use roads and/or decommissioning old roads before building new ones; may also need to manage the activities that occur as a result of access features (e.g., stricter hunting rules)
- **Cumulative effects thresholds** can be useful if part of an action plan, but could also create a ‘get in first’ attitude with respect to development; if used, could go farther by defining thresholds at different phases of development; need to consider timeframes (how quickly land recovers from an activity); more money could be spent on reclamation to increase the area available to new projects
- **Conducting research and collecting baseline data** – possibly focusing on areas with most economic potential, or areas with high probability of finding rare species or heritage resources; it was repeatedly noted that project proponents should be responsible for helping to build the baseline data, particularly in areas of uncertainty, prior to a project going ahead
- **Applying the precautionary principle** in areas with large knowledge gaps
- **Incorporate adaptive management principles** into the plan so it can be flexible in the face of new information and changing conditions, keeping in mind that truly good adaptive management requires substantial resources and that investors like a level of certainty (where the “no go” areas are, consistent regulations and policies)



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3. How will choices be made for values where there is a lack of data? Some resources have more available data than others – how will we ensure these are considered equally?
4. How will water quality, quantity and flow be protected and how this will change across zone boundaries.
5. Can LMUs be adaptive and change over time? For example, start with high conservation focus until additional information obtained, but leave potential open (versus allowable and not allowable)
6. “Implementation cost” – what does this mean?
7. How are international considerations being taken into account (e.g., access corridors and wildlife habitat shared across the Canada-US border)?
8. How is the Dawson region being considered within the context of the Yukon as a whole, considering there is no Yukon economic plan and we are looking at small units within the planning region?
9. Should be considering timber and other forest values that are currently within wilderness fire management zones that have no suppression protection associated with them (as per the Forestry Management Plan); how do we protect these values?
10. How can money that has already been spent be reflected/incorporated into the framework (e.g., established mineral claims with money already invested)?
11. Can you provide clarification on what the shelf life of the plan will be, how often reviewed and how this will be decided?
12. Will the plan be ‘gospel’ or ‘guide’?
13. How do we design access corridors when we are still unsure about locations of many resources?
14. How do we make recommendations without proper parameters around what the budget is?
15. Will the plan be identifying Community Areas for future expansion of Dawson City (residential, landfill and other infrastructure, etc.)?
16. How will the plan deal with protection of viewsheds – forestry setbacks ~200m, at what cost/benefit?
17. Is the Commission going to use low/high zoning?
18. How will spatial overlap of economic activities be managed? What industry will get priority?



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